



DRAFT

Iowa's Early Care, Health and Education Professional Development System Blueprint/Framework

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Introduction

"Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful" is Iowa's goal for young children. This document delineates the need for and provides recommendations to support a key component contributing to that goal – *the creation of an effective early care, health and education professional development system.*

An effective professional development system is defined as; "multi-faceted and crosses many sectors in an effort to reach a variety of early care, health, and education professionals." The system that Iowa is building addresses elements of leadership, regulation and standards, education, articulation, training, compensation and evaluation. This document will:

- Describe the historical perspective of early childhood professional development in Iowa;
- Provide rationale for need of an integrated professional development system; and
- Establish a mission, goals and recommendations for a professional development system.

Historical Perspective of Early Childhood Professional Development

Since the early 1980s, many state agencies have received funding to invest in early childhood professional development to improve skills of early care, health and education providers. Although many initiatives and much funding has been provided, efforts were primarily specific to a state agency and a *system* of professional development was not evident. Typically programs, committees, or initiatives were targeted and funding for professional development may or may not have been aligned.

This has generated a splintered perspective of options and professional development support for early care, health and education personnel. The chart in Appendix A shows some of the key historical milestones that supported professional development opportunities in the last 28 years.

In reviewing the state's past efforts, it is evident that the time has come for a statewide system of professional development to be aligned with training standards, priorities and needs of preservice and inservice for Iowa's early childhood personnel. State resources are too costly to not align with best practices of quality early childhood.

While health and family support are important components of a multi-faceted early childhood professional development system, currently standards, regulation or state licensure exists for personnel in these systems. This document is focused on the unmet professional development needs of the early care and education system.

Rationale for Integrated Professional Development System

Many important statewide, regional and local initiatives support families, early care providers and the success of all children. Issues of concern for families and early care and education professionals in past decades are still of concern in 2008. These issues include:

1. Lack of a coordinated, non-duplicative professional development system;
2. Lack of personnel standards and qualifications;
3. Children entering kindergarten without sufficient social and academic skills;
4. The high number of homes where both parents work; and
5. Compensation crisis for personnel in the field.

While great progress has been made in many areas, Iowa has not yet:

- Developed an integrated “system” of early childhood care and education professional development, or
- Ensured that high quality early childhood providers are available to every child in Iowa.

1. Iowa needs a coordinated, none duplicative professional development system

Each of the early childhood service delivery systems offers some training and educational opportunities within their agency, often funded by a variety of grants and one-time dollars, rather than on-going, sustainable resources. Given that each of these systems has separate, designated funding streams to support training, the potential exists for duplication or variations of quality and content of professional development delivered throughout the state. Additionally, information and access to quality professional development is inconsistent throughout the state, particularly in rural areas. Early Childhood Iowa continues to address these issues and works to support systemic professional development, but more progress is needed.

2. Iowa needs an integrated, articulated system of personnel standards and competencies

Currently disciplines such as child care and education have their own personnel standards that vary widely, despite the fact that the practitioners’ work may have similar impact on young children. For instance, Department of Human Services (DHS) regulations allow an adult with no formal education to serve as a lead teacher in a childcare center or community-based preschool. Iowa’s new Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four Year Olds requires an appropriately licensed teacher holding a bachelor’s degree with an early childhood endorsement. Recent efforts to increase competencies for early childhood providers are important, but Iowa still falls short of establishing state requirements for all personnel working with young children.

Additionally, Iowa does not have an effective system to provide current providers with an articulated, well-defined career pathway. This is of growing concern - as the program standards requirements (e.g. Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Standards, etc.) increases, there is a greater demand for more highly qualified early childhood providers. For example, Iowa’s Quality Preschool Program Standards require teachers be licensed

by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners and hold an early childhood endorsement. Head Start program standards require that teacher assistants (staff who implement program activities under direct supervision) have a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA), an associate's degree or two years of college.

National research supports the fact that the knowledge and skills of early care and education teachers are among the most important factors in determining how much a young child learns. Studies in Texas, Alabama, and New York of K-12 teachers concluded that "teacher" qualifications (based on measures of knowledge, education, and experience) account for a larger share of the variance in students' achievement than any other single factor" (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999). What early childhood teachers know and are able to teach have a major influence on the learning and development of young children. Clearly, the preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers in early childhood education and care is fundamental to the vision expressed in this report.

3. Children entering kindergarten without sufficient social and academic skills

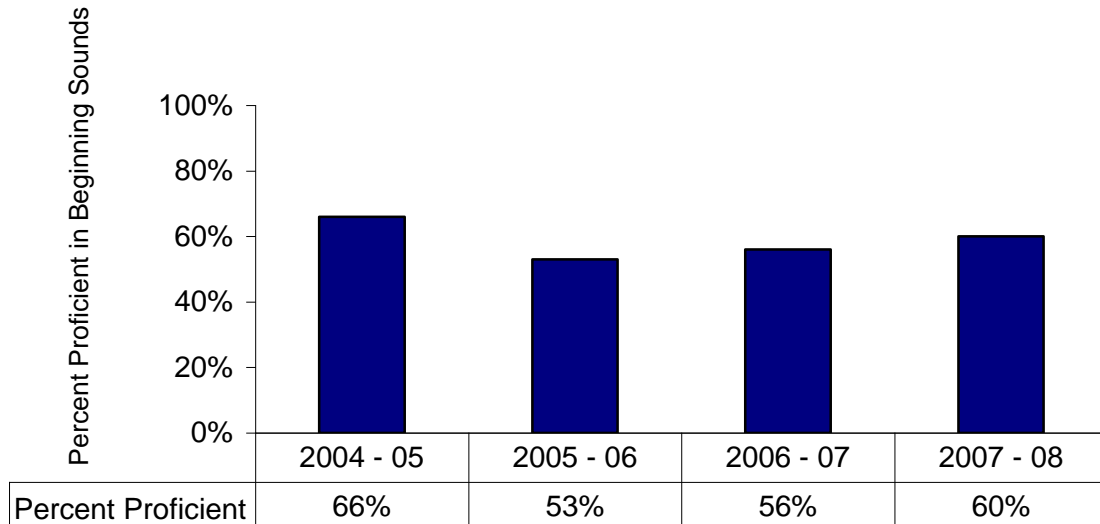
As researchers describe how early childhood education can best effect positive outcomes for children birth through age 8, one finding stands out: *teachers are the key* (Peisner-Feinberg et al.2000; National Research Council, 2001). In the study entitled "Iowa Child Care Characteristics and Quality" (Midwest Child Care Research Consortium, Feb.2003) national studies by Peisner-Feinberg, et al, 2001 were cited as finding that good quality child care predicted more advanced academic and social skills through the second grade, particularly for children of parents with lower levels of formal education.

The professional development of teachers has been shown to be related to quality of early childhood programs (Howes et al., 1992; Kontos et al., 1997), and program quality predicts developmental outcomes for children (Kontos et al., 1997; Vandell and Corasaniti, 1990). Formal professional education has consistently been linked to positive caregiver behaviors (Bollin and Whitehead, 1990; Espinosa, 1980; Fischer, 1989; Howes, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1998). Studies have generally found the strongest relationship between the number of years of education and the appropriateness of a teacher's classroom behavior (Arnett, 1989; Berk, 1985; Clarke-Stewart and Gruber, 1984; Howes, 1997; Kontos et al., 1997; Ruopp et al., 1979). There is also research support for the proposition that education focused specifically on child development and early childhood education improves the performance of child care providers (Epstein, 1999; Ruopp et al., 1979; Kontos et al., 1997). The authors of *Who Cares for America's Children* (National Research Council, 1990), concluded that, although both overall education and caregiver training specific to child development are related to positive outcomes for children, "the two existing national studies point to caregiver training as the more important factor" (p. 91).

House File 761 requires school districts to assess all kindergarten children by October 1 of each year and report the results of that assessment to DE. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is one of the assessment tools mentioned in the legislation; however, other kindergarten assessment instruments can be used and must address the literacy components of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, letter knowledge, and concepts of print, and be technically adequate for kindergarten assessment. Figure 1 represents DIBELS data for a four-year trend, from 2004-2005 to

2007-2008. As indicated, the percent of children proficient in beginning sounds as measured by DIBELS increased by 4 percent from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008, however only 60% of all children assessed are proficient.

Figure 1. Percent of Children Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure (N=20,868).



Data Source. Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2007-2008

Note: Data regarding other approved assessment instruments will be reported in the Annual Condition of Education Report, 2008

4. Iowa has a high number of homes where both parents work outside the home

When parents work, they need someone to care for their children. Iowa continues to rank in the top three of the 50 states in which young children reside in families with all parents working. Concerns of parents include:

- finding child care - families in Iowa's rural communities often have to drive to neighboring communities to work, yet their child needs child care before or after school in their home community,
- access to quality child care, and;
- increasing economic stress putting pressure on all families for basics – food, fuel, etc.

These factors increase the need for quality child care and education programs staffed by quality providers.

5. Compensation crisis for personnel in the field of early care and education

"Inadequate wages and benefits drive knowledgeable and highly motivated child development professionals out of the early care, and education field, even though many of these professionals see this type of work as challenging." (Susan Hegland, Ph.D., Iowa State University Extension Bulletin. 2005)

Research points to a strong connection between the education level of an Early Childhood Education practitioner and the quality of care provided. Yet Iowa offers few incentives to enhance education levels for early childhood personnel. In the words of one practitioner, "A quality caregiver applies for a job at a beautiful new day care center.

The center wants to hire someone with experience and preferably a college degree. It sounds great until they offer \$7.25 (figure updated to new state minimum wage) an hour. Most practitioners turn down jobs because they must survive themselves.”

In addition, there is a need for highly qualified individuals (those with credentials, appropriate degrees, and experience) to be attracted to this field and retained in early childhood education. A shift from an emphasis on training to an emphasis on encouraging the field to engage in course work that will lead to appropriate degrees and professional credentials such as the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and teaching licenses and endorsements is essential.

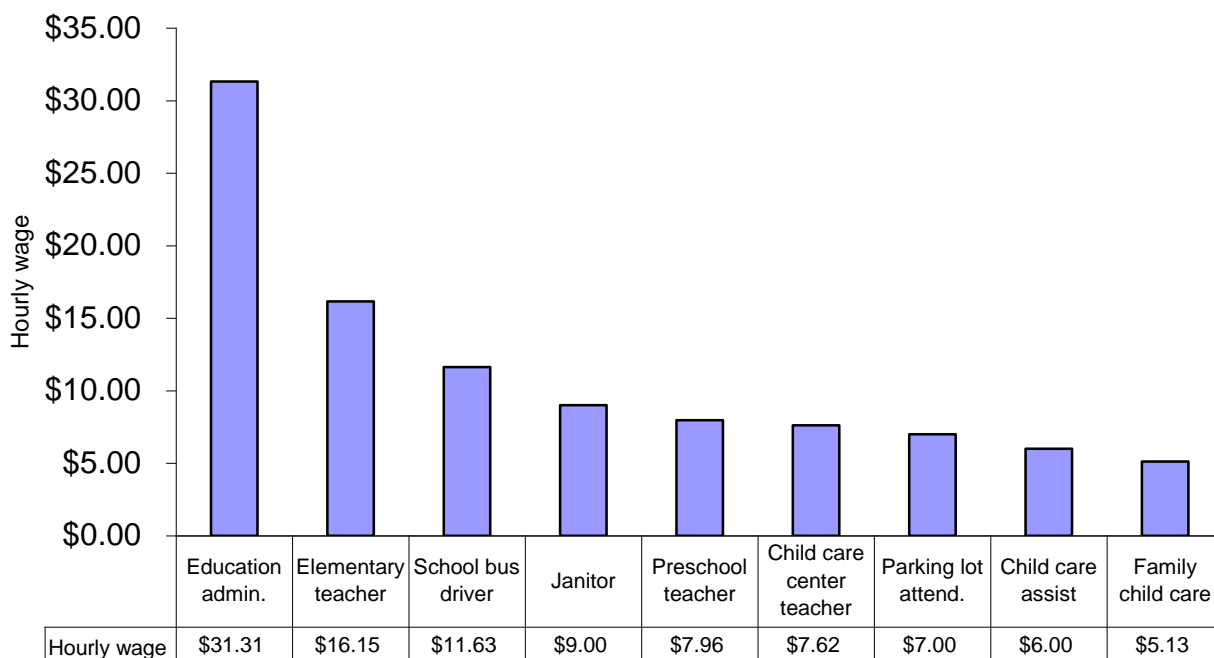
At the heart of high quality child care is a warm and responsive relationship between child and caregiver. Having the same caregiver for a long time is important because relationships take time to form. When caregivers come and go frequently, children are distracted from learning. Strong, stable relationships are necessary for children to focus on learning.

In the Iowa Early Childhood Education Workforce (IECEW) study of 2003 the average turnover rate across all programs was 35% for assistant teachers and 29% for teachers. The highest turnover rates occurred in for-profit programs; assistant teachers 57% and teachers at 35%. The lowest turnover rates occurred in publically operated Head Start and Shared Visions programs; assistant teachers 22% and teachers 14%. Additionally, the “Benefits, Rewards and Support: Incentives to Build Quality and Reduce Turnover in the Iowa Child Care Workforce report (2006) it was reported that turnover for teachers was significantly higher in urban centers (median 29.1%) than in rural centers (median 7.3%). Similarly, assistant teachers turnover in urban centers (median=61.5%) was significantly higher than for rural centers (median-22.6%). An additional benefit of reduced turnover is the more efficient use of training funds and enhancement of availability and accessibility of community child care.

Additionally the IECEW study (2003) reported the median annual income for full time teachers working in child care centers was \$15,850 with teacher assistants earning \$12,480. Family child care providers working full time worked an average of 46.8 hours per week for \$14,709 annually. In addition family providers reported that:

- 22% worked a second paid job
- 50% did not get paid if a child was ill or did not attend
- 60% did not get paid if a child was on vacation
- the cost of providing child care in a home was \$9,450 annually leaving the take home pay at \$5,259

Figure 2. Wage Comparison of Median Hourly Wages.



Data Source. IECEW study 2003.

Employment benefits for early care and education personnel are also limited. For example, although 83% of home providers close for holidays, family vacations, sick days and training days, only 28% are paid by parents for those days. For Center programs, only 63% of teachers and 52% of assistant teachers receive paid sick days; 74% of teachers and 58% of assistants received vacation days. Retirement benefits are provided for 42% of center teachers and 36% of assistant teachers. For family child care providers 56% contributed to Social Security within the last year and 63% contributed to a retirement plan in the last 12 months.

Building Iowa's Early Childhood Professional Development System

Lack of a coordinated system and personnel standards, children unprepared for entering kindergarten, the increasing need to support working parents, and low wages for child care providers; together with the growing research base on the importance of early learning point out the need for major investments in teacher preparation and professional development to support new capacities in teachers of early childhood education. The Early Childhood Iowa Professional Development component work group has defined the following guiding principles as key to establishment of an Early Childhood Professional Development System in Iowa.

Guiding Principles of the Early Childhood Professional Development system:

All work is assumed to be completed in the spirit of inter-agency Collaboration as part of Early Childhood Iowa.

- The early childhood professional development system will target teachers seeking education degrees, teachers, associates, family support providers, consultants, directors/administrators, and home visitors.
- The system will include both transcript and non-transcript options for family, childcare, preschool, and school providers. Horizontal and vertical articulation will be assured to demonstrate continuity, consistency, and accountability.
- The system will be based on high quality evidence-based professional development and all courses will be taught by highly qualified instructors/teachers.
- Competencies are important in all environments for young children including family, center, and school based early care and education. The competencies range from awareness at entry level to higher levels of application of knowledge and skills.
- Competencies will be aligned using the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Preparation Standards and the *Iowa Early Care & Education Professional Development Core Body of Knowledge for Best Practices*.
- Professional development provided by Childcare Resource and Referral, Iowa State University Extension, Community Colleges and four year colleges and universities aligns with and addresses competencies of the identified standards.
- The early childhood professional development system framework should be embedded in state government with a designated lead agency to oversee the system. The Department of Education was recommended (ECI PD Stakeholders/Haggard, 2007)

Key Elements of a Quality Early Childhood Professional Development System

In early childhood there are many different systems (Head Start, Early ACCESS, child care, special needs and health). It is difficult and time consuming, yet critical, to develop a system of systems that is strengths-based and embraces the reality of diversity. Each system maintains responsibility for its own role-specific training. A quality statewide professional development system does the following:

- Provides leadership and coordination to ensure accountability, communication and efficient use of resources;
- Has multiple levels and pathways with standards-based competencies at increasing levels of complexity. Each level articulates with the next and has corresponding professional recognition;
- Includes both formal (credit) and informal (non-credit) learning opportunities;
- Addresses pre-service and in-service sectors;
- Implements compensation and benefits initiatives that are linked to education and training accomplishments, including financial aid and scholarships;
- Provides a formal training and trainer approval process to ensure consistency and quality of training;
- Maintains centralized accessible information systems that support regional training initiatives
- Ensures quality through on-going evaluation and monitoring processes; and
- Establishes clearly defined roles and responsibilities for stakeholder advisory groups.

Early Childhood Iowa supports the creation of a statewide early childhood professional development system in Iowa. Using the “guiding principles” and “key elements” will ensure a high quality system, effective use of resources and support early childhood providers to reach the goal “Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful”.

Appendix A

Milestones of Iowa's Early Childhood Initiatives

YEAR	MILESTONE
1980's	Many state agencies had separate child care committees
Early 1980's	Child Development Coordinating Council
Mid 1980's	IA Capitol Complex Child Care study committee
	IA Rural Development Council
1989 thru 90's	Regents center for early development education UNI (more of a board)
1989 to early 90's	IA Child Care Alliance led through Polk Co CCRR
Late 1980's	State Child Care Advisory Council created the Quality Childcare Sub-Committee
1993	Creation of state-wide CCR&R system
1994	First year of the Iowa Early Care, Health, and Education Congress
1997	Iowa Child Care and Early Education Network
1998	Creation of Community Empowerment
1999	HF 761 mandated a professional development leadership council including agency and organizations of the early care and education field
2002	Early Childhood Iowa
2002	Iowa Workforce study developed through ISU CD dial to study education and compensation levels in the field
2003	The Iowa Early Care and Education Professional Development project moved to the Iowa Child Care and Early Education Network
2005	Early Childhood Iowa Professional Development Component Group work replaces IECEPD committee
2005-06	Incentives study reflects on need for financial and other benefits to impact retention in the field